DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 437 799 EC 307 649

TITLE	Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Missouri School for the Blind, St. Louis.; Missouri State Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jefferson City. Div. of Special Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	56p.; For 1994-1995 report, see ED 392 211.
CONTRACT	H025A50009-98
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Agency Cooperation; *Deaf Blind; Delivery Systems; *Early Identification; *Early Intervention; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Family Involvement; Infants; *Inservice Education; Outreach Programs; Parent Education; Postsecondary Education; Preschool Education; Program Development; State Programs; *Technical Assistance; Toddlers; Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Missouri

ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of a federally supported program to provide services for children with deaf-blindness in Missouri. The project focused on the development of partnerships to coordinate service networking and to provide systematic training to build local capacity for early intervention, educational, transitional, vocational, early identification, and related services. The project provided technical assistance to 204 identified infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults and their families. Specific outcomes of the project include: (1) increased student identification and tracking; (2) home-based early intervention and parent training to 51 families by 41 trained Parent Advisors; (3) inservice and technical assistance to 204 students who are deaf-blind, their families, and their providers; (4) direct consumer impact and change to 33 students in communication, person-centered planning, treatment, educational goals and strategies, inclusion, orientation and mobility, and employment; (5) increased local capacity-building; (6) development and implementation of a two-year distance learning program leading to orientation and mobility certification; and (7) development of a statewide public vision screening program for students with deafness. Individual sections of this report describe the project's purpose, goals and objectives, accomplishments, outcomes, problems, impact, and budget. An appendix includes evaluation results. (CR)

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GRANT PERFORMANCE REPORT

ED 437 799

1. PR/Award No. **(e.g., H185A200211-95)**

H025A50009-98

See Block 4 on your last Notification of Grant Award

2. Recipient Name and Address

MO Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education
Special Education Division
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Unless address has changed, repeat from Block 1 on your last Notification of Grant Award

3. Project Title:

The Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project (State & Multi-State) CFDA 84.025A

This should be identical to the title of the approved application

4. Contact Person:

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Provide the name and title of the project director or other individual who is most familiar with the content of the performance report. Also include telephone and fax numbers and E-mail address.

5. Performance Reporting Period:

10-1-98 - 9-30-99

This is the time-frame for information requested in Parts III, IV and V on project status and supplementary information/ changes. (See instructions for details.)

6. Current Budget Period:

10-1-98 - 9-30-99

See Block 5 of your last Notification of Grant Award

Authorized Representative:

Name (Typed or printed): Linda Van Eck Title: Project Coordinator

Signature: Linda Van Eck 12-22-99

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2

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INDEX

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

III. PROJECT STATUS OF GOALS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, & PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Project Coordinator 4

Family Support Coordinator 15

Transition Planning Consultant 21

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH 38

V. BUDGET INFORMATION 40

VI. APPENDIX

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of this annual progress report is to report progress made on goals and objectives of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education's effort to provide **comprehensive services** to individuals who are deafblind and their families. Since 1973, Missouri has provided quality technical assistance and support services to State educational agencies, local educational agencies, adult service agencies, private agencies and families.

This project represents an **innovative interagency team collaboration** among service providers and families at both state and local levels. Deafblindness is a low-incidence and complex disability, presenting unique service delivery challenges to service providers (Everson, 1995). The mission of the project is to develop partnerships, to coordinate service networking, and to provide systematic training to build local capacity for early intervention, educational, transitional, vocational, early identification, and related services.

Target

The project is **Statewide** in scope and provides technical assistance to **204 identified infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults** (ages 0 to 22 years)**, and their families.** Interagency team collaboration with State, local, public and private agencies currently serving or having the potential to serve individuals who are deafblind is a focus.

Approach

The project is designed to build on an established Missouri **interagency delivery approach** (State Task Force) that was initiated in 1989. At that time, the focus was on addressing needs of transition age (16-22 years) deafblind individuals at the State level. The scope of the team collaboration model is broadened to include needs of individuals of all ages (0 to 22 years); to replicate the team collaboration model at local and regional levels (local task forces); and to build upon the expertise of existing programs through **train-the-trainer and mentor models**.

The project focuses on seven objectives:

1. To provide technical assistance for early intervention including identification, referral, assessment, training, family support and service coordination.

2. To provide technical assistance to families and to public, private, and state agencies on effective strategies for children, youth, and adults who are deafblind.

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3. To develop a train-the-trainer model on deafblindness and a mentor program.

4. To develop and strengthen transdisciplinary and interagency service delivery approaches with State, regional, and local educational and adult service agencies.

5. To provide information assistance to families, SEAs, LEAs and adult service agencies on basic skills, sensory training, technology, best practices, transitioning, family dynamics, and team-building.

6. To improve consumer/family input in the special education and transition process (IEP, PFP).

7. To support a parent-to-parent outreach network.

The operation of this project is administered and coordinated by Missouri School for the Blind, a direct extension of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education.

Outcomes

- Increased student identification and tracking
- Home early intervention and parent training to 51 families (birth to 5 years) by 41 trained Parent Advisors
- Inservice and technical assistance to 204 students who are deafblind, their families, and the providers who serve them
- Direct consumer impact and change to 33 students (6-21 years) in communication, person-centered planning, treatment, educational goals and strategies, inclusion, orientation and mobility, and employment
- Increased local capacity-building through INSITE, VIISA, Hand In Hand, and Employment in Best Practices courses
- Development and implementation of four Train-the-Trainer models and a mentor program
- Development and implementation of a two-year distance learning program leading to orientation and mobility certification, in partnership with Western Michigan University
- Increased community awareness and access
- Development of a statewide public vision screening program for deaf (including Usher Syndrome) students through the Department of Health

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- Development and implementation of a Parent-to-Parent network and a parent mentor program (birth-5 years)
- Development of three employment teams
- Increased local task force leadership within four local task forces
- Interagency collaboration
- Leveraged funding and resource sharing

Impact

- Improved, coordinated, and individualized services to 204 students who are deafblind and their families
- Increased capacity of public, private, and state agencies serving this population

Implications

The following best practices, based on Project experience, were identified as key to the success of the Deafblind Project activities. These same effective practices will continue to drive activities beyond this project-reporting period through the next cycle (FY 1999-2003).

- Leadership
- Stakeholder driven
- Teaming and interagency collaboration
- Parent involvement
- Train-the-Trainer and Mentor models
- Evaluation measures

III. PROJECT STATUS OF GOALS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, & PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Project Coordinator

III. PROJECT STATUS

Project Coordinator

Executive Summary

Substantial progress was made F.Y. 98-99 in meeting grant objectives. Expected timelines were met with no scheduling problems evidenced.

Primary outcomes include:

a. tracking of deafblind students in the state
b. family focused, early childhood home programs provided to 51 families (0-5 years) through the MoSPIN program
c. coordinated and expanded family support systems
d. technical assistance to 204 deafblind learners and their families
e. continued professional development and local capacity building through INSITE, VIISA, HAND IN HAND training and coursework
f. increased visibility of deafblind needs and systems change in service delivery through an established interagency task force model at both the state and local levels
g. multi-level funding and interagency agreements
h. improved and expanded educational, recreational/leisure, work and living options for deafblind individuals
i. development of a working flowchart for a statewide public vision screening, through the Dept. of Health, for identified deaf (including Usher Syndrome) students
j. identification of 2 new children with Usher Syndrome from the vision screening conducted at Missouri School for the Deaf

Accomplishments by Objective

1. **Provide technical assistance for early intervention including identification, referral, assessment, training, family support and service coordination.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Missouri Statewide Parent Involvement Network (MoSPIN) Program, an INSITE early childhood adoption site, provided a family focused program to 51 families in the natural setting - the home. Of these children, 1 was below the age of 1 year, 8 were age 1, and 6 were age 2. In the preschool range, there were 13 three-year-olds, 11 four-year-olds, and 5 five-year-olds. This shows a remarkable increase in early identification. All families in the MoSPIN Program receive the quarterly parent newsletter, *Parent Time*, which is edited by a parent in the program.

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Outcomes:

Early identification of infants birth through 2 years has increased significantly. Fifteen (15) newly identified families (a total of 51 families) are receiving a weekly home program. A parent survey was conducted, in April 1998, which measured family growth and satisfaction. Results of the MoSPIN Parent Survey indicated that 100% of the families were "satisfied to very satisfied." Overall satisfaction increased 2-22% across six categories. Additionally, 75-100% reported an increase in knowledge across 16 indicators (see Appendix A). Routinely, parents learn about their child's visual/auditory diagnosis and the impact it may have on learning and development.

The family's role was strengthened as decision-maker and partner in the IFSP and IEP processes. Throughout the project, children enrolled in the MoSPIN program are assessed on both the INSITE checklist and the Callier-Azusa Scale to demonstrate growth in the developmental areas. Baseline measures were taken in the first 6 months and post measures were conducted at the end of the school year. Data was shared with Utah State University for tabulation.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.1,1.2,1.3)

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

A six-day INSITE training was conducted in July 1998 and November 1998 for 5 new Parent Advisors who serve MoSPIN families Statewide. Workshop evaluations cite high satisfaction with the training and materials and a gained confidence and ability to provide in-home services. Credit was offered through Lindenwood College. The Request for Proposal (RFP) was developed and submitted to the Division of Purchasing to solicit bids for additional providers in January 1999. Currently, there are 41 Parent Advisors on contract.

Outcomes:

Five new Parent Advisors have enhanced their skills to more effectively provide a family focused program in the home, Statewide. Parent Advisors were recruited, trained and contracted to serve gaps in rural Missouri. Parent Advisors assist families in the transition process from home to school at age 3 years.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.5,1.6,1.7,1.10,1.11,1.12), #4 (4.8)

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The MO Deafblind Project is also a VIISA adoption site to replicate the Utah State University inservice model for early interventionists who serve children birth through 5 who are visually impaired. Six early childhood teachers completed VIISA Course I, in May 1999, on infant home programming (0-2 years). Graduate credit through Lindenwood College was available. Students were required to complete 8 home study assignments on which they were graded by portfolio assessment. The co-instructor of the course previously completed both VIISA courses and participated in a local trainers' training sponsored by the MO Deafblind Project in 1994.

The application process for VIISA Course II will begin F.Y. 99-00.

Outcomes:

Six early childhood teachers enhanced their expertise and knowledge of resources for this infant population. There is potential for 6-24 sensory impaired infants and their families to benefit from improved educational programming and support as a result of the course each year. Upon completion of the course, VIISA participants completed a self-evaluation indicating knowledge and skill acquisition, as well as, ability to serve as a local resource. It is anticipated that 19 additional early childhood teachers will have the capacity to serve children ages 3 through 5 years statewide.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.5,1.6,1.7,1.10,1.11,1.12); #4 (4.8)

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The MO Deafblind Project Coordinator and Lead Parent Advisor have followed the service delivery procedures established for public awareness, early identification, referral and service provision between the Part C Program and the MoSPIN Program. Additionally, the MO Deafblind Project Director and Coordinator met with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind staff to lay the foundation for an interagency agreement for early childhood services, and met with the AD HOC Committee on Blindness in September and November 1997, to review the state's Strategic Plan for this population. A plan for vision teacher competencies and assistive devices for all ages (0-21 years) is also being developed.

Outcomes:

The Part C Early Childhood supervisors continue to assist in MoSPIN Parent Advisor recruitment efforts. The Part C program, 1st STEPS, continues to refer to MoSPIN for "family training." 100% Of families have a 1st STEPS service coordinator. An award was received to continue Part C funding for direct services. The Director of RSB and the Superintendent of Missouri School for the Blind (MO Deafblind Project Director) continue to work on an

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interagency agreement for early childhood services.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.1,1.2,1.9,1.11); #4 (4.8)

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

Outreach staff provided Orientation and Mobility (O&M) assessments to 2 MoSPIN families this period.

Outcomes:

Families received information specific to their preschooler on travel skills, concept development, safety indoors and outdoors, and cane devices. These reports can also be assistive to school IEP teams for educational planning. O&M is now a related service under the reauthorized IDEA.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.6)

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Project Coordinator and Lead Parent Advisor participated in the Southeast SKI*HI/INSITE Regional Administrators' conference call, in April 1999, to further collaborate and benchmark early childhood services, including universal vision and hearing screening of newborns. A Southeast Regional Conference is planned for June 2000 in Atlanta.

Outcomes:

Attendance at the Southeast Administrators' meeting provided information on universal vision and hearing screening that may be replicated in Missouri. It is anticipated that over 200 parent advisors from 9 states will be trained as a result of the Southeast Regional Conference in June 2000. Information on universal hearing screening, which was assistive in providing direction to the committee assisted in which the development of HB401 was passed this year requiring universal hearing screening in Missouri.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by the technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.8), #2 (2.10)

2. **Prepare federal report on deafblind annual census.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

In December 1998, the deafblind annual census forms were mailed to 525 LEAs for reporting. At the same time, the deafblind census mailing was combined with the American Printing House registry mailing. Both reports were due in April 1999.

Outcomes:

204 Deafblind individuals are currently registered and are eligible to receive technical assistance. 1088 Legally blind individuals are registered and are eligible to receive educational aids, textbooks, and equipment from American Printing House for the Blind Quota funds. Continued service development was planned using census demographics.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.4); #4 (4.9)

3. **Provide technical assistance to families and to public, private, and State agencies on effective strategies for children, youth and adults who are deafblind.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The following technical assistance activities were coordinated and sponsored either in full or in part by the Deafblind Project in the F.Y. 98-99 reporting period:

a. direct consults by MO Deafblind Project staff on communication programs, behavior, vision and hearing assessments, registry reporting, use of interpreter, person centered planning, introductory Braille, orientation and mobility, assessment instruments, and transition
b. orientation and mobility assessments were conducted for 2 MoSPIN families
c. a Weekend with the Experts was provided to 60 professionals on Recreation, in July 1999
d. a Family Learning Vacation was provided to 45 families on Recreation, in July 1999
e. through a collaboration of Missouri School for the Blind, Missouri Assistive Technology Project, American Foundation for the Blind and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, a conference on technology and assistive devices was conducted for 100 professionals in November 1998
f. INSITE training was provided to 5 Parent Advisors in July and November 1998
g. VIISA, Course I training was completed by 6early childhood teachers in May 1999
h. Usher Awareness, vision screening, and the Missouri Referral System training was provided to 50 nurses in September 1998
i. parent mentor training for Parent-to-Parent Network was coordinated in [illegible] 1999
j. a parent retreat was coordinated for 8 MoSPIN families in September 1999

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k. 9 teachers certified in VI completed year one of a two-year distance learning program for O&M certification, in partnership with Western Michigan University

Outcomes:

Improved educational programming for individual students has resulted in growth in communication systems including sign, and Braille. Educational staff are now working in teams to enhance creativity, collaboration and service delivery. Better accuracy in census reporting is being evidenced and the need for continued assistance in this area is noted. Person centered planning continues to be a successful vehicle to plan for transition.

Outcomes of technical assistance activities include refinement and continuous improvement of Missouri's deafblind service delivery and future local capacity building. New partnerships and collaborative models were developed at the NTAC Cohort Workshop. O&M standards were developed for the Missouri State Plan now that O&M is a related service.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #2 (2.5,2.10); #3 (3.3); #4 (4.3,4.5,4.7)

4. **Provide information assistance to families, SEAs, LEAs and adult service agencies on basic skills, sensory training, technology, best practices, transitioning, family dynamics and team building respite care orientation.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

Project factsheets were updated and disseminated to the Center for Innovations in Special Education (CISE) for future printing and inclusion in resource binders for the 8 Missouri Professional Development and Resource Centers. This effort assists in referral and resource linkages. A video promo (7 min.) was disseminated to highlight services and build awareness of the 6 Outreach projects. Families and professionals statewide averaging 10 calls per day have accessed the toll free line. A new feature added to the line was a resource directory. Also, MSB created a website to further inform consumers of services. Articles, manuals, texts, videotapes, flashlight kits, assimilators and journals were loaned by the Project's material center. Pediatric hospitals were instructed to refer parents of at risk infants to contact the 1ST STEPS Program to connect with MoSPIN and other services. Monthly Parent Advisor newsletters, quarterly parent newsletters and bi-annual American Printing House Materials Center bulletins were produced by Project staff and a parent. Articles were contributed to the state education newsletter, INNOVATIONS. Information about the Deafblind Project was shared at the Special Education Administers' Conference in September 1999.

Outcomes:

Information assistance guides families, educators and service providers in the awareness and application of educational strategies, assistive technology devices, and resource agencies.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #5 (5.1,5.3,5.4,5.5,5.6,5.7)

5. **Support a parent-to-parent outreach network.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Deafblind Project and Delta Gamma Foundation for the Blind collaborated on developing a Parent-to-Parent Network. Parents are linked with other parents whose child has a similar eye diagnosis.

Outcomes:

2 Parents were trained. In addition, 8 MoSPIN families attended a parent retreat, coordinated with Delta Gamma, September 1999. A Family Learning Vacation was held July 1999 on Recreation. Parents are involved in the planning and decision-making process for identifying needed services for their children. Parents have learned successful techniques to better work on teams (IEP teams, transition teams). Parents have formed friendships with other parents, have learned how to access community supports, and have a better understanding of their child's visual and auditory diagnosis.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #7 (7.3,7.4,7.6)

6. **To develop and strengthen transdisciplinary and interagency service delivery approaches with state, regional and local educational and adult service agencies.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Project Coordinator continues to collaborate with Part C, Part B, CSPD, Missouri School for the Blind, Missouri School for the Deaf, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, IMPACT and others to coordinate a comprehensive delivery of referral, assessment, information and training services.

The Project Coordinator participated in an NTAC sponsored State Action Planning Meeting led by Pat Rachal. An NTAC Cohort Meeting was held, which developed next steps for benchmarking state models in employment and communication.

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Outcomes:

A Projects and Outreach Directors (POD) Consortium was developed and coordinated by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition to the Deafblind Project staff of MSB, representation from Missouri School for the Deaf, State Schools for Severely Handicapped, Project Access (autism), Missouri Assistive Technology Center, and Center for Innovations in Special Education (transition) make the consortium a strong vehicle for statewide collaboration and resource provision.

Collaborative statewide systems are in place for referral, assessment, information and training for infants and preschoolers. Multi-level funding is also in place to support both direct and indirect services for ages 0-5 years. Some systemic components of the MoSPIN Model may be replicated in other Midwestern states.

A State Action Plan was developed by the State Interagency Deafblind Task Force to build on existing systems and to address any gaps. The focus is on interagency collaboration strategies and deafblind communication.

A coordinated and collaborative system is in place to best utilize the resources and technical assistance from Missouri's 3 Outreach Programs and 3 Technical Assistance Projects. Services were provided to 525 LEAs.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.1,1.2,1.3,1.7,1.8,1.9,1.10,1.11), #4 (4.7,4.8)

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Deafblind Project Coordinator continues to serve as the secretary for the State Task Force, which meets bi-monthly. The Deafblind Project Coordinator has had the primary responsibility for sharing resources, deafblind expertise, deafblind data, and evaluation measures, which can be benchmarked and utilized by the State Task Force. The Deafblind Project Coordinator ensures that all members receive minutes and assignments in a timely manner and contracts for interpreters.

Outcomes:

Strategic planning and evaluation procedures are in place at both the state and local levels providing collaboration, a unified direction, and feedback for continuous improvement.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #1 (1.1,1.2,1.3,1.7,1.8,1.9,1.10,1.11), #4 (4.7,4.8)

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Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Project Coordinator continues to participate, as secretary, on the Usher Planning Committee. The committee is a sub-committee of the State Deafblind Task Force and has statewide representation from DESE, Department of Mental Health, Bureau of Deaf Services, Department of Health, Missouri School for the Blind, Missouri School for the Deaf, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, parents, and consumers. The committee meets bi-monthly.

Fifty public school nurses and nurse consultants received awareness training in Usher Syndrome, vision screening and the referral system in September 1998.

Outcomes:

The Usher Committee follows a working flowchart of process steps for the delivery of an ongoing statewide training and public screening. From its inception, the committee has utilized a statewide collaborative approach. Fifty (50) public school nurses and nurse consultants are trained statewide in providing vision screenings to include contrast sensitivity, peripheral assessment, and balance. Steps are in place to provide an expanded vision screening to deaf individuals statewide to identify vision loss including Usher Syndrome. Steps are in place to provide resources to the school team and family when children are identified with vision loss. A pilot screening at MSD conducted in the 1997 school year resulted in 160 deaf students being screened. Two (2) students were identified as Usher and were referred for follow-up. Information packets for the family and school team were developed to provide information and support to newly identified children and their teams. The screening is now conducted annually at MSD.

7. **To follow up on the recommendations of the Federal Onsite Review.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Federal Onsite Review Team concurred with the MO Deafblind self-assessment that improvement could be made in the area of evaluation of project goals and objectives. Following up on the team's recommendations, the MO Deafblind Project staff coordinated with NTAC, a State Interagency Action Planning Meeting led by Pat Rachal. Missouri School for the Blind applied for and was the first school ever to receive the Missouri Quality Award.

Outcomes:

A State Action Plan with performance indicators was developed. Local and state deafblind task force teams are now utilizing a more systematic action planning process to show outcomes. Teams are now reporting pre- and post-case scenario case information. Quantitative frequency data and qualitative satisfaction data were collected and analyzed for reporting. Participation

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in the Missouri Quality Award application process and receiving the award provided excellent feedback for continuous improvement of quality services.

8. **To develop a train-the-trainer model on deafblindness and a mentor program.**

Summary of Technical Assistance Activities:

The Deafblind Project Coordinator and the Transition Planning Consultant had primary responsibility for developing a Hand In Hand Train-the-Trainer model program. Successful components already employed from both the [illegible]ITE and VIISA models were replicated. Six (6) instructors from the state were trained to deliver the Hand In Hand curriculum by the Deafblind Project Coordinator and the Transition Planning Consultant. A trainers' manual with script and resources was developed by the Deafblind Project Coordinator and the Transition Planning Consultant for further local capacity building.

In addition to the Hand In Hand Train-the-Trainer model and mentor program (described in the Transition Planning Consultant Project Status Report), a mentor program was developed and coordinated by the Deafblind Project Coordinator with Rosanne Silberman, Hunter College. Two (2) interns from the Deafblind Personnel Preparation Program at Hunter College did a 2-week practicum in Missouri under the Deafblind Project Coordinator's supervision in January 1998. This experience provided the opportunity to observe and consult to deafblind programs in St. Louis, Kansas City, Blue Springs, and Arnold. Interns participated in a transdisciplinary team assessment, a functional vision assessment, and an orientation and mobility assessment. Interns focused on individual programming for 4 students in a variety of severity levels. Interns also assisted the Deafblind Project by critiquing videotapes that were used in the Hand In Hand Course in February 1998.

Outcomes:

See the Transition Planning Consultant section for detail on outcomes of the Hand In Hand Train-the-Trainers program, Hand In Hand course, and Hand In Hand mentor program.

Deafblind interns gained skills and knowledge in providing technical assistance to individual students and programs and direct experience with students and state services. Interns indicate that they plan to implement information learned to assess vision, adapt materials, present materials, and select reading devices. Interns produced written reviews of videotapes for the Hand In Hand Trainers manual developed by the Deafblind Project.

Specific objectives of the MO Deafblind Project currently being met by this technical assistance activity are: #3 (3.1,3.2,3.3,3.7)

Problems Encountered

No problems were encountered F Y 98-99.

III. PROJECT STATUS OF GOALS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, & PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Family Support Coordinator

III. PROJECT STATUS

Family Support Coordinator

Objective 4: To develop and strengthen transdisciplinary and interagency service delivery approaches with State, regional, and local educational and adult service agencies.

The Family Support Coordinator has primary responsibility for the coordination and leadership for the State and local task forces. During this project period we encountered great successes as well as developmental task force issues.

Important outcomes have been accomplished in the areas of task force leadership, interagency collaboration, and local capacity building. The increased leadership roles of the local members are in part due to successful local capacity building efforts.

Developmental issues included decreased membership and participation and the need to redefine goals and objectives. These issues provided an excellent opportunity to assess task force objectives and outcomes, membership, and task force processes. This has led to a subsequent rebirth and enhanced task force development for this project.

Local Task Force Accomplishments: The St. Louis Task force is co-chaired by local members. They have adopted a charter and formal bylaws and actively utilize this in their operation. A primary focus for the St. Louis Task Force is training and staff development to build local capacity. They have provided leadership and participation in the Train-the-Trainer Hand In Hand training, and continue to utilize calendar training in their work.

The Kansas City Task Force includes twenty agency representatives. They have incorporated as a not for profit group. Local task force members hold the leadership roles for this group. They have a very committed membership, and are strong advocates for individual consumers. They share individual consumer updates and provide support and assistance to one another. A key focus of this task force is community awareness..They have implemented a large scale program of events for Helen Keller week and will continue activities throughout the year. They hosted a Hand In Hand training in their area to enhance service delivery.

The Mid-Missouri Deafblind Task Force was established three and one-half years ago, and represents the largest geographic area, which includes 16 counties. Eighteen agencies and one consumer participate in the task force. This task force meets monthly and is well attended, though it requires a number of the participants to drive a great distance. During the past year they have been moving toward i[illegible]reased local leadershi[illegible] To maintain a consum[illegible] focus, they read their [illegible]ssion, goals, and values s[illegible]ements at the beginn[illegible] of each meeting. The[illegible]have compiled a note[illegible]ok of all relevant task force information and documents. They have developed a collaborative approach to assist

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another task force in the difficult transition for a former consumer. They have hosted joint task force meetings across geographic boundaries to facilitate service delivery.

St. Joseph/Northwest Missouri Task Force was developed seven years ago to address the specific needs of two consumers. Their needs are currently met. Consequently, the task force chose to take a break to evaluate the needs for this task force. During the last six months of the project period, the group restructured and is very active in developing local participation, leadership, community awareness, and training.

Activities:

1. Coordinate Monthly Local Task Force Meetings

The task force coordinator participated in and provided leadership through four task force meetings each month. These meetings (2-4 hours in length) included area service providers and agencies, consumers, and a parent, whenever possible.

The purpose of each task force is to increase collaboration, build local capacity, and enhance the service delivery system. The task force structure included a mission statement, annual goals and activities, consumer updates to identify consumer issues, problem-solving strategies to address needs, and action plans to enhance interagency collaboration. The focus included the completion of action plan steps related to community awareness, training, and consumer outcome reporting.

The geographic areas served by the task forces include Kansas City, St. Joseph, St. Louis, and the Columbia, Missouri regions. Over fifty counties within the state are represented in these task forces.

Outcomes

Expanded implementation of a task force structure was developed to document improved coordinated consumer services within local task force communities. A case study approach was utilized to track consumer benefits. Inservice training needs were identified by needs assessment and training provided. Increased leadership, independence, and responsibility on the part of each task force have led to enhanced local capacity.

Accomplishments

- Annual review of the mission statement and the development of new goals and activities based on current needs.
- Monthly action planning and review of accomplishments.
- Implementation of additional structure for each task force focusing on specific outcomes.
- Increased accountability for action plans and individual steps.
- Meeting evaluation checklist is being developed.
- Kaizens are utilized at each meeting.

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- A checklist for task force best practices is being developed for implementation.
- Design and development of a clearinghouse model to increase task force communication and interaction.

Evaluation Measures Utilized to Accomplish the Goals

Meeting agendas and minutes document membership, consumer needs, activities, goals, collaborative efforts, problems, and successes for each task force. The leadership roles that were assumed by local task force participants have been documented to verify increased local capacity and participation. Each task force developed a centralized notebook and includes their history, case study information, and other documents documenting activities, action plans, issues, and solutions, through the life of each individual task force.

Problems Encountered

Membership and Commitment: these task forces have been in existence for 4-9 years. Natural membership changes have occurred over time. Progress in collaboration and enhanced services have diminished urgency, and in some cases decreased motivation and commitment has occurred. Individual consumer crises occur less frequently. In the past these crises have been a motivator for task force participation. To address these changes and revitalize the task forces, the following strategies are being implemented: a new Referral Protocol and clearinghouse/deployment model has been developed.

2. Case Study Model

Approximately 12 deafblind consumer case studies, and an additional 20 consumers have been discussed for the purpose of problem-solving and resource sharing for these individuals. Maintaining a consumer focus has been an important indicator of success for task force development.

Outcome

A protocol was developed to document consumer outcomes and implemented in part by two task forces.

Problems Encountered

Staff and membership changes have made this difficult to maintain. This documentation will be further developed and implemented during the next project cycle.

3. Collaboration

A strength of the task force model is the collaborative efforts that have developed over time with the 75 participating professionals representing consumers, parents, local, State and private agencies. The

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interpersonal relationships that have developed over time facilitate this aspect. The agency personnel who participate in the various task forces report that the support, resource sharing, and collaborative efforts are very important to them and motivates their ongoing participation. They will utilize the Referral Protocol to make referrals to the State Task Force. They will do so when systems issues are identified and unresolvable at a local level.

Outcomes

Sustained core membership and collaboration in task force meetings has resulted in an increase in expertise and training to enhance services for this population. Collaboration has resulted in shared funding and resources to benefit consumers. A network of interested and informed service providers to provide best practices has increased. Efforts to expand collaboration across task force geographic boundaries have been developed to enhance service delivery and resource sharing for consumers. Joint meetings of task forces have been held, as well as a statewide meeting of all task forces to build statewide cooperation and collaboration.

Problems Encountered

The statewide collaboration across task forces remains in its infancy stage. This has been a difficult outcome to achieve. To address this problem we will be implementing a newly developed clearinghouse model to address the need for enhanced communication and resource sharing to increase positive outcomes for the next project period.

4. Local Capacity Building

Each local task force has participated in training through NTAC to define goals, develop outcome measures and determine training needs for this reporting period. Action plans were developed and have been implemented by each task force. Training opportunities have been provided by participating task force agencies during this period to build skills and knowledge. The statewide meeting held in September 1997 has provided the prioritization and action plan to address the training needs within the state. This assistance from NTAC has been invaluable in attaining our desired goal for enhanced local capacity.

Outcomes

Local task force members and service providers continue to expand their knowledge through their participation in Hand In Hand training, and their participation in the mentoring program. Participation in the collaborative training in Best Practices for Employment has been an exciting learning opportunity to increase local capacity.

Problems Encountered

The structure of the Hand In Hand training makes it difficult for agencies to commit to participation. Release time of seven days and full participation is required. Consequently some settings that could benefit greatly are unable to participate. An additional issue is the integration and utilization of new methods and best practices in a service delivery setting. These problems are being addressed in the next project cycle.

5. Statewide Referral Protocol

The State Task Force meets bi-monthly, and is chaired by the Family Support Coordinator. During this reporting period the Family Support Coordinator has had primary responsibility for restructuring the task force, including the review of the statewide Referral Protocol. The local task forces have critiqued the Referral Protocol and changes are being implemented by the local task forces to facilitate appropriate referrals to the State Deafblind Task Force. This referral process offers a problem-solving methodology to assist local task forces in defining and resolving local issues.

Outcomes

The Referral Protocol provides a clear structure for the local task forces to request assistance from the State Task Force, to address systems issues, and, barriers to service delivery. This Referral Protocol has clarified appropriate referrals to the State Task Force and encouraged local responsibility and communication.

Problems Encountered

The local task forces have been reluctant to utilize this process and, consequently, referrals to the State Task Force have been reduced. This process is under review for the next project cycle. The State Task Force is in the process of restructuring and implementing a clearinghouse model to increase interaction between the State and local task forces.

6. Database to Measure Outcomes and Identify Levels of Collaboration

The local task forces continue to establish and utilize databases to track collaborative efforts, training, and local capacity building activities. Most importantly, individual case studies are monitored monthly to measure successful problem-solving and document outcomes.

Outcomes

An annual profile is being implemented for each case study to assess consumer progress and measure task force collaboration. Local task forces are taking more responsibility to measure accomplishments with consumers.

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Problems Encountered

Consistency in reporting outcomes is difficult to accomplish with changing staff and membership. Concentrated efforts to improve this component are underway.

7. Community Awareness

Each local task force has completed local task force brochures. The brochures describe the mission of each group and how families and agencies can make referrals to receive task force assistance. Local task forces have established community awareness activities in conjunction with Helen Keller Awareness Week. One task force has expanded awareness activities to a quarterly basis.

Outcomes

Deafblind awareness activities have been developed and utilized in agency settings, and for service providers unfamiliar with Deafblind issues. These efforts have improved services for consumers. One activity was developed for a taxi cab company to help them understand how their services affected a consumer. Their awareness has greatly improved and the consumer is treated with more sensitivity and understanding.

Problems Encountered

Task force brochures require regular updates and a clear dissemination plan is needed to maximize the benefits of this information.

III. PROJECT STATUS OF GOALS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, & PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Transition Planning Consultant

III. PROJECT STATUS

Transition Planning Consultant

The following report is an update and summative accounting of the activities of the Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) of the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project.

The report covers the activities for which the TPC has primary responsibility in objectives 1 - 6.

The TPC position went from 0.75 to 1.00 FTE 1 April 1999.

1 Direct technical assistance to the education and/or adult service agency staffs for school and/or transition age individuals

Technical Assistance Outcomes: Technical assistance is provided in the form of developing and implementing person-centered transition plans, providing consultation to formal Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), and Individualized Plans (IPs) for school and transition age students and youth, providing staff training in deafblind content areas (communication, orientation and mobility, vision utilization, etc) and, other technical assistance as needed by the student/youth, the family, and the agencies that serve them.

A Individual **NK**

Description of technical assistance activity:

Direct technical assistance to NK's family, his school, and the adult service agencies supporting him has been provided periodically over the past 6 years. NK aged out this year.

Specific activities during the past 12-month period include developing a comprehensive Essential Lifestyles Plan (ELP) that was used to create a "portfolio" for NK (used in training new support staff), participating in planning meetings attended by the agencies supporting NK, and providing consultation to NK's direct support staff in the area of communication.

Outcomes:

There have been several direct outcomes for NK as the result of these technical assistance activities. These outcomes include:

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1. NK's parents switched from one agency to another that was closer and provided better supervisory support.

2. NK's Individualized Plan (the service plan from the Regional Center of the Missouri Department of Mental Health) is based upon NK's ELP.

3. A "portfolio" based upon NK's ELP was developed. This "portfolio" was developed as a tool to train new support staff. In addition, NK's parents were given a "template" of NK's ELP and portfolio enabling them to update both in the future as needed.

4. The Transition Planning Consultant has submitted the ELP he developed for NK to the Person-Centered Planning Committee of the Missouri Department of Mental Health for credentialing as a facilitator of ELPs.

Specific objectives of the grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, #5, and #6.

B. Individual: **FP**

Description of technical assistance activity:

FP's family and school have been receiving technical assistance from the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project for about 3 ½ years.

Background information: FP graduated from the state residential school for the deaf June 1999. Included in her transition plan was attending college at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology. FP entered the NTID as a freshman in August 1999. Throughout that first semester, FP experienced many academic problems that could all be related directly to the lack of the NTID identifying and providing appropriate supports. The Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) was asked to work with NTID as well as a member of the New York State's Deafblind Project in identifying and providing the appropriate supports. Before these supports could be identified and secured, FP dropped out of the NTID and returned home to Missouri. Later, FP was selected by one of the new "employment teams" - created by another technical assistance activity conducted by the Missouri Deafblind Project (see, **IV Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness** in the Transition Planning Consultant's portion of this report below) - as its "focus youth" to receive services in job development/placement and job coaching. However, before the team finished its initial training, FP had found herself a job. The TPC has recently heard that FP is having some difficulties at her place of employment, therefore, the employment team may need to work with FP after all.

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A brief summary of the technical assistance activities over the past year includes: continued facilitation of FP's Personal Futures Plan (which ended when she moved to Rochester, NY, to go to college); collaboration with FP's parent and the staff of the New York Deafblind Project to identify and secure supports for FP at the NTID; and, cultivating and training an employment team to support FP in employment.

Outcomes:

Many of the anticipated outcomes (post secondary education) did not occur due to FP's withdrawing from the NTID. FP's securing employment occurred before her "employment team" was fully organized and trained. However, there are other outcomes that can be identified:

1. An "employment team" for the central part of Missouri has been established that works with additional youths with deafblindness. This team is also available to FP if she should need its supports and services in the future.

2. FP will retain her employment through assistance from the employment team.

Specific objectives of the grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, #5, and #6.

C. Individual **BY**

Description of technical assistance activity:

Background: For most of the time period covered by this report, BY attended the Helen Keller National Center for Deafblind Youths and Adults (HKNC) in Sands Point, NY. While there, BY acquired both independent living and work related skills. Six months prior to BY's planned exiting of HKNC, the Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) was asked by BY's "transition team" to provide assistance in planning BY's successful transition back to her home community from HKNC.

A comprehensive Essential Lifestyles Plan was developed with the assistance of BY and her training staff at HKNC. This plan not only identified her dreams and goals, it clearly detailed what skills BY acquired at HKNC as well as what supports would be needed for her to live and work independently in Kansas City, Missouri.

Once the ELP was developed, the TPC facilitated BY's transition team meetings in Kansas City and functioned as a liaison between the team and HKNC. The

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TPC also functioned as a liaison between BY's team, and the two local deafblind task forces which had provided support to BY in the past, and were involved in her transitioning back from HKNC. Finally, the TPC coordinated a planning meeting between all of BY's funding sources to identify which agency would fund which support and for how long.

In addition, an "employment team" for the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan area was created by the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project as part of another technical assistance activity (see **IV Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness** in the Transition Planning Consultant's portion of this report, below). This employment team selected BY as one of the two youths with deafblindness that it will serve.

Outcomes:

1. BY's transition team was able to effectively plan for BY's transition back to Missouri. BY's case manager at HKNC stated that rarely does a consumer have such good planning by a transition team in the home community.

2. Nearly all of BY's supports were funded and in place by the time she arrived back in Missouri.

3. Sheltered employment was secured for BY and she started work soon after she returned to Missouri.

4. A new Individualized Plan (IP) based upon BY's ELP was developed by the Regional Center of the MO Department of Mental Health.

5. Several agencies collaborated to identify and fund supports needed by BY for employment and independent living.

6. An employment team has been created in the Kansas City area that will continue to work with BY until she secures and retains competitive employment. The team will also work with additional youth with deafblindness.

Specific objectives of the grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, #5, and #6.

D. Individual: **JB**

Description of technical assistance activities:

Last spring, JB's LEA and her family requested the Transition Planning Consultant's (TCP) participation in JB's IEP meeting. JB's IEP team wanted the TCP to specifically look at communication and transitioning.

Outcomes:

1. Through the consistent use of manually coded English, JB's English skills have continued to improve including her reading and writing of Braille. This has also impacted her communicating with peers.

2. JB continues to participate in an inclusive setting most of her day at school.

3. JB has developed new friends in her school.

Specific objectives of the grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #5, and #6.

E. Individual: **MM**

Description of technical assistance activity:

The Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) has been a regular member of MM's ELP team for the past two years. The TPC has provided information to the team on resources available in the state as well as strategies for accessing services from state agencies. The TPC has also facilitated MM's "Work Team" (a committee of her ELP team) meetings. An onsite consultation was provided at MM's place of employment with the purpose of addressing vision, audition, and communication issues. In addition, the TPC supported MM's parents as they advocated for her with a state agency. The TPC conducted a functional vision assessment. Finally, the Project provided MM's supported living staff with a consultant who addressed MM's communication needs.

Outcomes:

1. MM's ELP team addressed her vision, audition, and communication needs.

2. MM's ELP team continues to develop ways for MM to more actively participate in her ELP team meetings.

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3. MM's work team secured temporary competitive and part-time "bench work" employment for her.

4. Vision, audition, and communication supports were identified and put into place at MM's place of employment.

5. MM's parents better understand those services to which they are entitled through the state rehabilitation services for the blind; they have successfully advocated for MM with this agency.

6. A daily anticipation calendar system has been established for MM and her supported living staff uses it consistently with her.

7. Good interagency collaboration has been documented (agencies include the Regional Center of the MO Dept of Mental Health, the county Senate Bill 40 agency, MM's supported living staff, and the Missouri Deafblind Project).

8. MM's direct service staff at work and at home are learning Sign and are using it with her.

9. New glasses and new hearing aids have been obtained for MM as the result of recent ophthalmologic and audiological assessments, resulting in increased visual and auditory functioning.

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, #5, and #6.

F. Individual: **PY**

Background: PY is a three-year-old child who started to receive services from his LEA. This was the first child with deafblindness the LEA served to date, so the LEA contacted the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project to learn what supports and services they could secure.

The Project provided an onsite educational consultation, an orientation and mobility assessment, and resource information.

Outcomes:

1. PY's classroom teacher received information regarding best practices on classroom activities and materials, which have been implemented.

2. PY has been registered with the American Printing House for the Blind Materials Center for Missouri.

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3. PY received an orientation and mobility assessment. As a result, PY's classroom teacher is working on PY's body parts/concepts and basic non-cane travel skills.

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, and #5.

G. Individual: **MJ**

Description of technical assistance activities:

MJ's LEA requested assistance in developing a transition plan for MJ's move to middle school as well as to assess MJ's communication. The LEA specifically wanted the transition plan to be based upon a person-centered plan. The LEA also wanted MJ's mother's input into his communication program.

The Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) met with MJ's mother to discuss conducting a person-centered plan for MJ (e.g., Personal Futures Plan, Essential Lifestyles Plan, etc.)

Outcomes:

1. MJ's mother now has information about Personal Futures Planning and Essential Lifestyles Planning.

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, and #5.

H. Individual: **AH**

Description of technical assistance activity:

AH's classroom teacher requested that the Transition Planning Consultant mentor her in conducting a functional vision assessment on AH which could be replicated with the teacher's other students.

Outcomes:

1. An educationally oriented vision report based upon the functional vision assessment was written. The report specifically focused on increasing AH's visual skills by integrating her visual skills into her interpersonal communication.

2. AH's classroom teacher knows how to conduct a functional vision

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assessment and can write an educationally oriented vision report based upon that assessment.

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, and #5.

I. Individual: **EC**

Description of technical assistance activities:

A brief summary of technical assistance activities includes: 1) developing an action plan with EC's IEP team identifying what technical assistance was needed by EC's IEP team and identifying which agency could best provide that technical assistance; 2) providing an onsite consultation that focused on EC's communication, inclusion, and interaction with peers; 3) initiating an Essential Lifestyles Plan (ELP); and, 4) initiating the development of a "portfolio" to aid in the transitioning of EC from elementary to middle school.

Outcomes:

1. An ELP has been started for EC.

2. EC's classroom teacher, therapists, and other consultants have initiated the development of a "portfolio".

3. EC's itinerant teacher of the hearing impaired has started a series of inservice training for EC's direct service staff addressing communication and peer interaction. This resulted in an increased consistency of staff for using the appropriate modes of communication with EC.

4. EC's mother is serving as parent representative on both the local and state deafblind task forces.

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, #5, and #6.

J. Individual: **KB**

Description of technical assistance activity:

KB's LEA requested the Transition Planning Consultant's (TPC) participation in her IEP. As a result, the following two technical assistance activities were developed for KB: 1) facilitation of a person-centered plan (with KB's participation as a co-facilitator) from which a transition plan for graduation

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from school would be developed; and, 2) receiving services from an "employment team" created by the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project.

Outcomes:

KB moved from the state of Missouri before the technical assistance activities could be initiated. However, one outcome can be identified:

1. The Missouri Deafblind Project created an employment team that services youth with deafblindness. This team will serve youth with deafblindness in the metropolitan St Louis area (see **IV Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness** in the Transition Planning Consultant's portion of this report, below).

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, and #5.

II Continue the development and expansion of the Missouri Deafblind Task Force Model

Technical Assistance Outcomes: 1) the individuals and agencies participating on the State and local task forces receive technical assistance in the areas of content (deafblindness) and process (teaming, collaboration, problem solving, identification of systems issues, etc.); and, 2) as a result, the task forces continue to build local capacity bringing about improvements in services (educational, (re)habilitational, etc.), community involvement, etc., for individuals with deafblindness, their families, and the agencies that serve them.

Background information: The Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) position was only part-time (0.75%) at the start of the reporting period and went to full-time midway through this period. Due to the limited amount of time, the TPC was, initially, a standing member of only the State Task Force and not the local task forces. Once the TPC position became full-time, the TPC became a standing member of the local task forces as well.

The specific objective of this grant addressed by these technical assistance activities is #4. Additional objectives that are addressed by specific activities are identified below.

A The State Deafblind Task Force

Description of technical assistance activities:

The Transition Planning Consultant currently functions as the Recorder for the State Task Force, producing the minutes of each meeting, generally, within two weeks of the meeting.

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Outcomes:

1. Clear record of State Task Force meetings and activities.

The TPC participated in the technical assistance planning meetings between the State Task Force, the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project, and the National Technical Assistance Consortium (NTAC) which has resulted in the development of a plan for NTAC's plan for technical assistance to the State of Missouri.

Outcomes:

1. Identification and development of a systemic process/model to address individual vocational needs to expand employment options for youth with deafblindness (see **IV Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness** in the Transition Planning Consultant's portion of this report below for greater information regarding this activity).

2. Several teams of professionals have been created and are receiving training in best/effective practices for employment of individuals with deafblindness.

B. **St. Louis Deafblind Task Force**

Description of technical assistance activities:

A brief summary of technical assistance activities conducted with this Task Force include: 1) participating in a special meeting with the purpose of re-organizing the Task Force; 2) participating in regularly scheduled monthly meetings of the Task Force; and, 3) recruiting a parent and consumer representative for the Task Force.

Outcomes:

1. The Task Force revised its Mission and Values Statements.

2. The Task Force identified goals for the next twelve-month period.

3. The Task Force has returned to a case study/consumer focused format.

The Task Force has started the process of identifying best practices in teaming, etc.

5. The Task Force has parent and consumer participation again.

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Additional objective of this grant addressed by these technical assistance activities is #6.

C. **Greater Kansas City Deafblind Task Force**

Description of technical assistance activities:

The Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) mentored the Kansas City Task Force in planning/coordinating a workshop. The Task Force was asked to assist the Missouri Deafblind Project in hosting two courses in the Kansas City area. The first was the entire 1998-1999 Hand In Hand course (three sessions). The second was the first session of the Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness course.

The TPC also attended the Task Force's regular meetings in January 1999.

Outcomes:

1. The Training Committee of the Task Force now has experience in coordinating workshops and trainings. This will enable the Committee to plan and execute workshops and trainings on their own. In addition, the Committee can assist the Project making local arrangements for workshops and trainings sponsored by the Project but conducted in the Kansas City area, which is 250 miles from the Project's location in St. Louis.

Additional objective of this grant addressed by these technical assistance activities is #3.

D. **Northwest Missouri Deafblind Task Force**

Description of technical assistance activities:

Background: The Northwest Task Force stopped functioning in 1997-1998. In February 1999, the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project's Family Support Coordinator and Transition Planning Consultant met with representatives from several agencies in Northwest Missouri that expressed interest in reorganizing the Task Force.

A brief summary of the technical assistance provided to this Task Force includes: 1) functioning as the Task Force's Secretary/Recorder until the Task Force selects someone locally, 2) mentoring the Task Force in conducting a training needs assessment, 3) assisting the Task Force in the identification of children, students, and youth with deafblindness in the twelve counties of Missouri served by the Task Force; 4) acting as the liaison between a deafblind

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youth's transition team and the Task Force; and, 5) providing information on best practices in the area of content (deafblindness) and process (teaming, collaborating, etc.)

Outcomes:

1. A strong, active interagency task force is now operating in the twelve counties of northwestern Missouri.

2. The Task Force is planning an Introduction to Deafblindness workshop for the direct service staff of agencies participating in the Task Force.

3. The Task Force will conduct an initial training needs assessment of the direct and supervisory staff of the agencies participating in the Task Force.

4. The Task Force has clearly defined Mission and Values statements.

5. The Task Force has clearly articulated goals and has developed a plan to realize those goals.

6. The Task Force is working on a brochure to increase public awareness of deafblindness and of the Task Force.

7. The Task Force has initiated a plan to identify individuals of all ages with deafblindness who live in the twelve-county area served by the Task Force. The Task Force will then assist those education and adult service agencies supporting the individuals with deafblindness in determining what supports, if any, the Task Force can provide these agencies.

Additional objectives of this grant addressed by these technical assistance activities are #1, #2, and #5.

E. **Central Missouri Deafblind Task Force**

Description of technical assistance activities:

A brief summary of the technical assistance provided to this Task Force includes 1) assisting the Task Force in the identification of children, students, and youth with deafblindness in the twenty-one counties of Missouri served by the Task Force; and, 2) providing information on best practices in the area of content (deafblindness) and process (teaming, collaborating, etc.)

Outcomes:

1. The Task Force is planning an Introduction to Deafblindness workshop for the direct service staff of agencies participating in the Task Force.

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2. The Task Force has clearly defined Mission and Values statements.

3. The Task Force has clearly articulated goals and has developed a plan to realize those goals.

4. The Task Force has initiated a plan to identify individuals of all ages with deafblindness who live in the 21-county area served by the Task Force. The Task Force will then assist those education and adult service agencies supporting the individuals with deafblindness in determining what supports, if any, the Task Force can provide these agencies.

Additional objectives of this grant addressed by these technical assistance activities are #1, #2, and #5.

III Hand In Hand Course

Description of technical assistance activity:

In 1999, the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project conducted the third Hand In Hand course in Missouri. In collaboration with the Greater Kansas City Deafblind Task Force which coordinated local arrangements (housing, meals, location, etc), the Project offered the course in Kansas City, Missouri, enabling greater numbers of professionals from that part of the state to participate in the course.

At the same time, and with input from the course instructors, Transition Planning Consultant initiated work on a Trainer's Manual that would be used by all the Hand In Hand instructors for course consistency and replication. This Trainer's Manual will also be used to train additional Hand In Hand instructors in the future.

Upon completion of the course, the TPC met with the course instructors, the State Deafblind Task Force, the Greater Kansas City Deafblind Task Force, and the St Louis Deafblind Task Force to evaluate the structure and content of the course.

Outcomes:

1. Eleven professionals (two teachers and nine adult service providers) completed the course.

2. Collectively, these eleven professionals provide education and other services to sixteen children/students/transition-age youth with deafblindness and fifteen adults with deafblindness across the state of Missouri.

3. Three of the participants will be invited to be trained as Hand In Hand instructors.

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4. With feedback provided by the Hand In Hand instructors and the task forces, the TPC will make needed modifications in the course format

5. The first draft of several sections (including the overheads and scripts for three sessions) of the Hand In Hand Trainer's Manual has been completed

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #3, #4, and #5.

IV Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness

Description of technical assistance activity:

As a result of two assessments of technical assistance needs conducted across the state, the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project developed the Best Practices in Employment of Individuals with Deafblindness course. The purpose of this course is to address the vocational/employment needs of individuals with deafblindness in the state of Missouri. This course provides instruction in best practices in employment issues relating to deafblindness with the outcome of developing a continuum of employment options for individuals with deafblindness within their communities.

In October 1999, the National Technical Assistance Consortium (NTAC) agreed to participate with the Deafblind Project in the implementation of technical assistance activity through planning content and partial funding.

The immediate anticipated outcome of this technical assistance activity is to train "employment teams" of professionals who will be able to place youth with deafblindness into appropriate jobs in such a way that these youth will remain employed.

In addition to successfully placing youth in jobs (and assisting them in retaining these jobs), the team members mentor their co-workers (and any new team members) in these best practices.

Specific activities of the Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) related to this technical assistance activity include: 1) identifying and recruiting team members; 2) coordinating the training sessions; 3) collaborating in the planning of course content and evaluation measures; 4) collaborating in the identifying and securing of course instructors; 5) functioning as a liaison between the Deafblind Project and NTAC; 6) functioning as a liaison between the Project and the teams; 7) functioning as a liaison between teams; 8) providing content and process information to all teams; 9) mentoring teams in the development of case studies; and 10) mentoring teams in data collection and evaluation.

Outcomes:

1. Three employment teams have been created.

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2 Two youth have already secured employment.

3 Teams are developing their case studies.

4 Team members have started the process of mentoring co-workers.

5 Teams are developing teaming skills.

6 Teams are beginning data collection and outcome evaluation.

Specific objectives of this grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #3, #4, and #5.

V Introduction to Deafblindness

Description of technical assistance activity:

The Transition Planning Consultant completed the second draft of the training materials for this day-long awareness building workshop. The training materials include: Presenter's Manual, Participant's Handout, and overheads. The first draft of the workshop was field-tested during the prior reporting period. Revisions were made during the current reporting period. This second draft will be field-tested in October and November 1999 as well as January 2000.

Outcomes:

1 Second draft of training materials has been completed and is ready to be field-tested and evaluated.

Specific objectives of the grant addressed by this technical assistance activity are #3 and #5.

VI Transition Networking Forum and Fall 1999 Weekend with the Experts

Description of technical assistance activity:

Background. The Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) is on the steering committee for the Transition Networking Forum. The Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project and Missouri School for the Blind agreed to host and sponsor the second annual meeting of the Forum scheduled for the beginning of October 1999. In addition, Missouri School for the Blind historically hosted, throughout the year, a series of "Weekend with the Experts" for professionals throughout the state of Missouri involved in education and rehabilitation of students with vision impairments. Since the Fall 1999 Weekend with the

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Experts immediately followed the Transition Networking Forum, the content of the Weekend focused on best practices of transition planning.

A brief summary of TPC's activities related to this technical assistance activity includes: 1) coordinating the Transition Networking Forum with the Forum's Steering Committee, Missouri School for the Blind, and the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project; 2) planning with the Forum's Steering Committee and Missouri School for the Blind, the content and agenda for both events; 3) coordinating with the presenter for the Weekend with the Experts; and, 4) preparing a case study presentation on a youth with deafblindness who successfully transitioned from Missouri School for the Blind to her home community.

Outcomes:

1. Approximately 20 professionals from across the country attended the Networking Forum and approximately 35 professionals (including Forum participants) attended the Weekend with the Experts.

2. Participants of the Forum identified the factors that contributed to successful transitioning of a youth with deafblindness from Missouri School for the Blind to her home community (these factors include: effective person-centered planning, strong interagency collaboration, solid parental involvement and leadership, etc.).

3. Participants of the Weekend with the Experts learned how to develop and evaluate transition plans and activities.

4. Groundwork was set for future Transition Networking Forums.

Specific objectives of the grant that are addressed by this technical assistance activity are #2, #4, and #5.

VII Student Identification and Updating Deafblind Census

Description of technical assistance activity:

In the final weeks of the reporting cycle, the Transition Planning Consultant (TPC) started working with all four of the local deafblind task forces as well as the Regional Consultant of the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) in identifying children, students, and youth with deafblindness in the counties served by the four task forces. This included comparing lists of known children, students, and youth with deafblindness maintained by the task forces and HKNC with the Missouri Deafblind Census. The TPC also provided guidelines to education and adult service agencies for identifying children, students, and youth with deafblindness. The TPC worked with the representatives from

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the Regional Centers of the Missouri Department of Mental Health to locate those children, students, and youth with deafblindness who had moved, graduated, and/or were no longer reported.

Outcomes:

1. Agencies participating on the local task forces better understand the requirements for reporting a child, student, or youth to the Missouri Deafblind Census.

2. Through the discrepancies between the Missouri Deafblind Census and the HKNC Registry, several youth with deafblindness have been found and will be reported on the next year's Census.

3. A packet that includes information on the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project, the Missouri Deafblind Task Force Model, and other state and local resources has been developed by the Project and will be sent to the families and direct service providers who have reported children, students, and youth with deafblindness on the next Census.

Specific objectives of the grant that are addressed by this technical assistance activity are #1, #4, and #5.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

The following best practices, based on Project experience, were identified as key to the success of the Deafblind Project activities. These same effective practices will continue to drive activities beyond this project reporting period through the next cycle (FY 1999-2003).

1. Leadership

Change can occur only when leaders are committed to improvement. The strong and systematic leadership of Project staff has provided a structure for the cadre of teams and task forces in the state. Leadership principles of strategic planning, creative problem-solving, goal setting, deployment, evaluation, and adult learning styles have been and continue to be modeled to inspire teams.

2. Stakeholder Driven

Stakeholders are continually provided the opportunity to make their technical assistance and service needs known through inservice needs assessments, focus groups, and activity evaluations. Stakeholders, including parents, are actively involved in activity planning on various teams and task forces. Students are included in the planning process through person-centered planning sessions. All project activities directly respond to the diverse and unique needs of the family and service providers.

3. Teaming and Interagency Collaboration

Building effective local teams and task forces is a sound practice which leads to true interagency collaboration. Leveraging human and financial resources provides best utilization of services and avoids duplication.

4. Parent Involvement

Providing support and training to families early on is critical to the child's development, family relationships, and family coping. Parent retreats for families of infant and preschoolers are important for networking, which reduces isolation. This could be expanded to families of children of other ages.

5. Train-the-Trainer and Mentor Models

An effective approach to providing advanced levels of professional development is through the train-the-trainer model. Both content and instructional techniques are emphasized and follow-up technical assistance is provided to the newly trained trainer. Distance learning technology has helped to make the model more available to those in rural areas.

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The mentor model provides support and feedback to the recipient in his own working environment. Skill application and implementation of action plans can be monitored and observed first hand within natural contexts. Both models are effective in building local capacity.

6. Evaluation Measures

The use of formative and summative evaluation measures provides direction and accountability for project goals, helps refine activities, and continuously improves the overall scope of the Project. A case study approach is an effective way to measure student progress and impact.

V. BUDGET INFORMATION

Funds were expended at the rates projected. The amount awarded was $156,668.00. Carryover funds in the amount of $7,320.00 were also expended to complete grant activities as proposed.

The total amount spent for FY 98-99 was $163,988.00.

There was no balance to report.

FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT

(Follow instructions on the back)

1. FEDERAL AGENCY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT TO WHICH REPORT IS SUBMITTED	2. FEDERAL GRANT OR OTHER IDENTIFYING NUMBER	OMB Approved No. 80-R0180	PAGE	OF
Grants & Contracts, 400 Maryland Ave., SW MES 3317, Washington, DC 20202	CFDA84.025A		1	1 PAGES

3. RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION (Name and complete address, including ZIP code)	4. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	5. RECIPIENT ACCOUNT NUMBER OR IDENTIFYING NUMBER	6. FINAL REPORT	7. BASIS
MO Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education Special Education Division P.O. Box 480 Jefferson City, MO 65102		H025A50009-98	[X] YES [ ] NO	[ ] CASH [ ] ACCRUAL

8. PROJECT/GRANT PERIOD (See instructions)		9. PERIOD COVERED BY THIS REPORT	
FROM (Month, day, year)	TO (Month, day, year)	FROM (Month, day, year)	TO (Month, day, year)
10-1-98	9-30-99	10-1-98	9-30-99

10. STATUS OF FUNDS

PROGRAMS/FUNCTIONS/ACTIVITIES ►	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	TOTAL (g)
	FINAL						
a. Net outlays previously reported	$ 0	$	$	$	$	$	$
b. Total outlays this report period	163,988						
c. *Less:* Program income credits	0						
d. Net outlays this report period (*Line b minus line c*)	163,988						
e. Net outlays to date (*Line a plus line d*)	163,988						
f. *Less:* Non-Federal share of outlays	0						
g. Total Federal share of outlays (*Line e minus line f*)	163,988						
h. Total unliquidated obligations	0						
i. *Less:* Non-Federal share of unliquidated obligations shown on line h	0						
j. Federal share of unliquidated obligations	0						
k. Total Federal share of outlays and unliquidated obligations	163,988						
l. Total cumulative amount of Federal funds authorized	163,988						
m. Unobligated balance of Federal funds	0						

11. INDIRECT EXPENSE	a. TYPE OF RATE (*Place "X" in appropriate box*) [ ] PROVISIONAL [ ] PREDETERMINED [X] FINAL [ ] FIXED			
	b. RATE	c. BASE	d. TOTAL AMOUNT	e. FEDERAL SHARE

12. REMARKS: *Attach any explanations deemed necessary or information required by Federal sponsoring agency in compliance with governing legislation.*

13. CERTIFICATION

I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that this report is correct and complete and that all outlays and unliquidated obligations are for the purposes set forth in the award documents.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

Linda Van Eck

TYPED OR PRINTED NAME AND TITLE

Linda Van Eck
Project Coordinator

DATE REPORT SUBMITTED

12-22-99

TELEPHONE (*Area code, number and extension*)

314-776-4320
ext. 250

269-102

STANDARD FORM 269 (7-76)
Prescribed by Office of Management and Budget
Cir. No. A-110

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VI. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

1998

MoSPIN FAMILY SURVEY

Total sent = 45
Total returned = 22
Return rate = 49%

Your relationship to the child: Mother = 18
Father = 4
Grandmother = 1

Your child's age: under 1 = 3
1 yr. = 2
2 yr. = 6
3 yr. = 6
4 yr. = 3
5 yr. = 2

Approximate length of time in MoSPIN Program: Less than 1 yr. = 8
1 yr. = 5
2 yr. = 3
3 yr. = 5
4 yr. = 0
5 yr. = 1

Please circle how you feel (and comment if you would like)

22% ↑

1. I am: very satisfied (72%) 16 satisfied (28%) 6 not satisfied with the MoSPIN Program (100)

Comments:
Our parent advisor is wonderful; We are really benefiting from the program; The parent advisor was always prepared and helpful; You learn how to maximize the child's vision for everyday life. The eye doctor cannot help you with this. Good program

16% ↑

2. I am: very satisfied (91%) 20 satisfied (9%) 2 not satisfied with my Parent Advisor (100)

Comments:
More than satisfied - Ginny is fantastic! We love her; Vicki Thomas finds answers to my questions. Has been very helpful with Laura's needs and compassionate. Ginny Williams is great; She is a very sweet and caring person; Ginny is excellent at answering any questions we have. We have a very good and supportive relationship. The distance has made our visits more difficult but we all seem to be adjusting and compensating well; Cindy is able to pick up very subtle visual clues which I usually overlook; Our parent advisor is very good; Ginny Williams is the best parent advisor; Ginny Williams - "The Best". Like her very well.

12% ↑

3. I am: very satisfied (68%) 15 satisfied (32%) 7 not satisfied with the "lessons" and discussions (100)

Comments:
Sometimes they do seem to move a little slow; I have learned things - things we take for granted every day and is different for Laura's world. Very good discussions; Some "lessons" are very beneficial and some do not apply to our situation at all. I feel our advisor should have more control over topic choice to cater to our specific needs; The lessons and discussions really help. I always look forward to each lesson

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100

82% 18%

4 I am very satisfied satisfied not satisfied with the help from my P. A. in locating resources

11% ↑

18 4

Comments:

Just ask Ginny and she can find it! She finds answers to my inquiries; Excellent - good at gathering resources, Any need we have ever voiced, she has done everything possible to assist or find assistance!, She goes out of her way to make sure everything is up to date and suitable for our child's condition. She usually brought the needed resources, Ginny Williams never misses an opportunity to inform me of resources that can help my son, She helps in any way possible

100

85% 15%

14% ↑

5. I am: very satisfied satisfied not satisfied with the help from my P A. during transition

11 2

Comments:

We're not to that point yet; Ginny was very knowledgeable, We are just beginning participation in Early Childhood Special Ed. with our advisor's guidance. Emily is getting therapy that we had no idea she needed or qualified for; Has helped in numerous ways to help our child get ready for the Public School System, She had me very prepared for what was coming. She was a great help to us.

100

55% 45%

2% ↑

6. I am very satisfied satisfied not satisfied with the "Parent Time" newsletter.

11 9

Comments:

There is a lot of interesting information in them, Enjoy receiving. We have not received a newsletter; Some items are interesting and helpful; Good information; Is very informative and helpful. It also makes me feel better knowing that we are not alone. I think it gives helpful advice, interesting comments and often very touching situations.

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I now have an increased understanding of:

100 %

YES NO my child's visual impairment

22

Comments:

Ginny has been fantastic in all areas. Without her, our understanding of Wyatt's diagnosis would not be as developed; Cindy provided very helpful resources. My child had several problems that I could pronounce, but not explain

100 %

YES NO the implications of my child's visual impairment.

22

Comments:

100 %

YES NO how environmental factors affect how my child sees.

22

Comments:

We have a better understanding because of using various programs outside of MoSPIN. Lighting is very important to my child and her condition. Although most of these factors are not of major effect.

100 %

YES NO how to provide a stimulating environment for my child.

21

Comments:

Ginny jokes and "claims" Wyatt's vision development has just taken off in development due to MoSPIN; I try to implement the suggestions from the lesson.

95% 5%

YES NO how to select or make appropriate toys and equipment for my child.

21 1

Comments:

But, toys are hard to find.

95% 5%

YES NO the importance of play.

20 1

Comments:

We haven't worked on this much as yet; Yes, but not to a great degree in our case.

90% 10%

YES NO the importance of social interaction for my child.

19 2

Comments:

100 %

YES NO how other problems (motor, hearing, etc) can affect my child.

21

Comments:

Emily's gross and fine motor skills had slipped significantly below age appropriate level. Without the evaluations, it would be very easy to not realize the problems that had developed and so not get her the needed therapy. My son is both severely mentally, visually and hearing impaired. The lessons on deaf-blind children have really been helpful to me as to how I can maximize his skills. The doctors do not tell you how since they deal with specific problems i.e. eyes, or ears, but not both.

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95% 5%

1% ↑ YES 21 NO 1 how I can improve my communication with my child

Comments:

~~7~~ ~~5~~%

10% ↑ YES 21 NO 1 how my child communicates with me

Comments

This was such an encouragement!

70% 10%

2% ↑ YES 19 NO ~~2~~ my child's feelings and needs

Comments:

Yes - sometimes it is still difficult to determine this.

95% 5%

1% ↑ YES 20 NO 1 how to find help and services for my child or our family

Comments:

We're just getting involved with the MoSPIN parent - to - parent sponsors. It's a great idea - I have yet to be contacted by my assigned sponsor; Know some resources and can get help when needed, Definitely.

86% 14%

7% ↓ YES 18 NO 3 how to share my feelings and needs with family or professionals

Comments:

Advice in reference to our ophthalmologist visits have been especially beneficial; It's still hard sometimes to talk about it; Constantly working on these; I don't know. I seem to be quiet or bleed all over everyone.

90% 10%

3% ↓ YES 19 NO 2 how to "cope"

Comments:

We haven't really worked on this yet; It has helped a little; Constantly working on these; Mostly, the parent advisor listened and didn't talk too much.

84% 16%

8% ↓ YES 16 NO 3 how to work with my school district to get appropriate services for my child

Comments:

We haven't arrived at that point yet; I would like Denise Cope or Darlene Felts to be with us at the IEP meeting. The school system is paying for the therapist I mentioned earlier. I feel this therapy will greatly benefit Emily in preparation for kindergarten. The parent advisor certainly knows the ropes. Ginny had a lot of information to pass on.

75% 25%

25% ↓ YES 12 NO 4 the IEP or IFSP process

Comments

Ginny has been very helpful in helping us with learning our IFSP process. I would still like guidance in developing their IEP. Yes, but we still have questions. I have questionable opinions of the "plans" Emily has had them done and I really don't see how they benefit (or guide?) anyone. It seems to be a form stuck in a file. An IFSP was done when Emily was 12 months old (when we lived in Colorado). We moved home to Mo., soon afterward and all agencies we have worked with asked for a copy but to our knowledge it has never been updated; Not sure. I was well versed prior to entering this process; Ginny prepared me for the IEP process when my son entered Columbia Public School's early childhood special ed program; Ginny was a great help.

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Overall, what I like best about MoSPIN and the visits by my Parent Advisor is:

The friendship that grows between parents and the advisor and the knowledge she brings, The information she is giving me regarding how to raise a blind infant. However, I wish there was more of this. I'm sure that there will be in the near future. Learning how to help the girls. Takes quality/quantity time to go over everything. I have learned quite a bit from Vicki I think. As a source of information and constant learning. Networking to other parents, It has been very helpful to me since I have had Zachary. Ginny, our parent advisor, does an excellent job of collecting resources for us. She also answers our difficult questions with a sympathetic ear. Very informative responses I get to concerns I have about situations as they arise. Denise's training and professionalism has been a great support to our entire family. Situations and problems change constantly as Emily changes and grows and having someone with Denise's training to watch her makes our awareness of trouble areas almost immediate. I think this is a huge benefit!. Laura is very interesting on what she teaches me. The weekly contact with someone knowledgeable in areas of vision and visual development. That she explains every thing and gives me copies of each lesson and copies meanings of words that I don't understand. That the advisor really seems to care and does get information that we ask for even if it takes some time on their part.I am very pleased with MoSPIN and our parent advisor. It has been very educational and very helpful. Sandy is a very good parent advisor. She cares so deeply and does her best to help us in any way she can. She always makes sure the lessons are suited to our child and also challenging,. She is my friend. She brought info about my child's visual problems, sat with me when I cried, was with me when I visited the school, etc., Ginny Williams is very concerned about my son and my family. She is very helpful by being very thorough with the lessons. She is always prepared for the lessons and discussions that we have, Carol has been a great support for our family in most areas. How helpful the lessons were and how well Ginny explained everything to us. She went out of her way to help us out, It has helped me understand my son's problem and how to work with him. Parent Advisor was very sincere and did a great job explaining things. Advisor was a great listener, also. Interaction continued even after our child's death. Overall, great program, great people. Very pleased with everything.

I think MoSPIN and the visits by my Parent Advisor could be improved if/by:

Helping out the existing parent advisors by adding new ones in different locations throughout the state so travel time would be less. I think everything is going great. They are great!, If I could keep Laura well enough from all her other problems so Vicki could see Laura more regularly. It is no ones fault, Laura has other health complications, Having a more flexible meeting time. I know it is difficult with the caseload- but meeting times are our major problems that limits our discussions. I would like some feedback on what the administration of MoSPIN think of Emily's development, progress, and the direction that she needs in the lessons offered by MoSPIN. (I guess more of a personal direction.) It seems someone out there is evaluating all these evaluations we do and hears of Emily's progress - does this information have an impact on the programs?, Seems to be fine to me. Develop a written program individualized for child's age covering most important activities to cover that week. I don't know. I do not have any suggestions for improvement. I feel that Ginny goes beyond her call of duty. She is always prepared for each lesson. I don't think you could improve Ginny Williams at all. She is a real professional at her job. There is no problem with the visits by my Parent Advisor.

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Any other comments you would like to make:

Thank you for taking my child and our family on as your clients!! The service that you provide is invaluable. We have already learned so much. Once again, I cannot express how much we need this service and how thankful we are to you for it. Denise and Darlene do well. Ginny is doing an excellent job. We always look forward to talking with her. This program has been a big part of our lives for 2 years and we've received a lot of good information. I especially like the awareness that some of the lessons give me. They make me consider things that I wouldn't have noticed or even thought was important. We appreciate MoSPIN very much and I know it has been a great benefit to Emily's development. I hate to think of what Emily would be missing if we hadn't participated in MoSPIN. One topic we touched on that I am more interested in is the visually impaired child and their relationships - siblings, parents, friends. Do we need to be training Emily differently in how to cultivate relationships. She has special needs and she will need more from some of her relationships than normal children. I am please with the program; We have been very pleased with our Parent Advisor. The newsletter has been encouraging to us as well. Thanks! Also we may be moving to Florida by May. Could you let me know if they have a School for the Blind like this one?. This is a good program that is helpful to all if people just ask. The program is good. I didn't have great expectations in the beginning. The effects and impressions came on slowly, and grew to great appreciation. Well, I know that this is unlikely to happen, but I wish that MoSPIN services could extend past 5 years of age. I am going to miss the homevisits when my son turns 5 - 1 year from now. Ginny Williams is a keeper. Even though we are in "transition" she remains our friend.

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